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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building

Statement submitted by United States Committee for UNIFEM, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.

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The United States Committee for the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM/USA) strongly supports the consistent and continual leadership provided by UNIFEM in the area of peace and security through its work to strengthen the gender focus in prevention and early warning mechanisms; improve protection and assistance for women affected by conflict; make women and gender perspective central to the peace processes; and support gender justice in post-conflict peace building.

UNIFEM, partnering with civil society organizations, had a major role in advocating for the October 2000 Security Council Resolution #1325 on women, peace and security - the first-ever addressing the status of women in armed conflict and peace-building. UNIFEM provided relevant information to the Security Council on areas referred to in Resolution #1325 and facilitated the Council's direct interaction with women affected by conflict.

UNIFEM also commissioned an Independent Expert Assessment of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building, which was released in 2002. This report emphasized that the UN system, governments and NGOs need to do more to mobilize resources and means to support women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations and offered 22 key recommendations for the full implementation of Security Council Resolution #1325. The report found that while there is compelling evidence that women are effective agents of peace they still have little influence on decisions to wage war or rebuild their countries.

UNIFEM has prioritized its efforts to promote women's leadership and to bring women's voices to the peace table. In 2002 alone UNIFEM was engaged in peace and security initiatives in 25 countries. In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, UNIFEM facilitated the establishment of peace clubs to make women's voices heard in advocating for an end to conflict. In Columbia, UNIFEM's support to the National Mobilization of Women against War assisted women's networks to develop a unified voice against war. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, UNIFEM provided assistance to the Women's Peace Forum that brought together 200 women for the final phase of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue to ensure women's participation in the on-going peace process. In Sierra Leone, UNIFEM has provided gender-based human rights training for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

UNIFEM has devoted extensive efforts to bringing women and their perspectives into the mainstream of national reconstruction in Afghanistan. UNIFEM is concerned with helping to ensure that women's concerns are reflected in the on-going legal reform process and the drafting of Afghanistan's new Constitution. UNIFEM has provided seed funds for women's judges and lawyer associations to foster participation in the political process and to strengthen the provision of legal services to women. UNIFEM has also supported the establishment of a working group on gender and law with participants from the Constitution Committee, Supreme Court and Judicial Commission.

UNIFEM's major work in Afghanistan has been to support the capacity building and programme development of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Making efforts to reach more women, UNIFEM is assisting the Ministry in establishing women's centres in several provinces. The centres will provide literacy and skills training as well as legal, psychosocial and health services. Community centres to reach the needs of displaced and returnee women are starting up.

The United States Committee for UNIFEM, one of sixteen voluntary committees worldwide working to support the mission of UNIFEM, has undertaken to raise funds for the establishment of women's centres in Afghanistan as part of its overall efforts to extend public awareness and increased financial contributions to UNIFEM's activities. UNIFEM/USA is also partnering with Peace X Peace to promote the role of women in peacebuilding through the documentary *"PEACE BY PEACE: Women on the Frontlines,"* which profiles women building peace in Afghanistan, Argentina, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Burundi, and includes Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM, as a featured speaker.